

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A ball-and-socket joint, comprising:
 - a housing;
 - a bearing shell inserted into said housing;
 - a ball pivot with a joint ball mounted pivotally in all directions in said bearing shell;
 - 5 a sealing bellows between the housing and the ball pivot, said sealing bellows having a pivot-side edge area;
 - a ball race fixed on said ball pivot; and
 - 10 a sliding ring receiving said pivot-side edge area of said sealing bellows, said sliding ring being slidably mounted to slide in said ball race and having said sliding ring having a sliding face surface facing the joint ball arranged adjacent to the ball race.
2. (Withdrawn) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein:
said sliding ring includes a collar made in one piece with said sliding ring.
3. (Withdrawn) A joint in accordance with claim 2, wherein:
said collar engages said pivot-side edge area of said sealing bellows.
4. (Withdrawn) A joint in accordance with claim 2, wherein:
said collar is made in one piece with an inner side of said sliding ring, said sliding ring cooperates with said pivot-side edge area of said sealing bellows in at least some areas.

2 **BEST AVAILABLE COPY**

5. (Original) A joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein:

said sliding ring includes an axial extension and a radial extension.

6. (Withdrawn) A joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein:

said race and said sliding ring define a gap between said race and said sliding ring.

7. (Withdrawn) A joint in accordance with claim 5, wherein:

said race and said sliding ring define a gap between said axial extension and a surface of said ball race.

8. (Withdrawn) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 7, wherein:

said sliding ring has an approximately L-shaped cross section comprising an axial leg as said axial extension and a radial leg as said radial extension, said radial leg is in sliding contact with an inner surface of said ball race.

9. (Original) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein:

said ball race has an approximately U-shaped cross section.

10. (Original) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein:

said sealing bellows has a surface slidingly in contact with a surface of said ball race.

11. (Withdrawn) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 10, wherein:
said surface of said sealing bellows which is in contact with said surface of said ball
race has a sealing lip in contact with said surface of said ball race.

12. (Original) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 10, wherein:
said surface of said sealing bellows which is in contact with said surface of said ball
race forms a labyrinth seal together with said surface of said ball race.

13. (Withdrawn) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 10, wherein:
said surface of said sealing bellows which is in contact with said surface of said ball
race has a sealing lip and a second surface of said sealing bellows forms a labyrinth seal
together with said surface of said ball race.

14. (Original) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 5, wherein:
said sliding ring is a shaped sheet metal part or a plastic molding;
said sliding ring receives and holds a portion of said sealing bellows between said
radial and axial extensions;
5 said radial and axial extensions are substantially perpendicular to each other;
said ball race is fixed to said ball pivot.

15. (Original) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein:

said ball race has a leg which is in contact with said sliding ring, said leg comprising lugs arranged at spaced locations from one another.

16. (Withdrawn) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein: said sliding ring has at least one radially extending slot.

17. (Original) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein: said pivot-side edge area of said sealing bellows forms a thickened material bead, which is pressed against said ball race or said sliding ring with an elastic pretension.

18. (Withdrawn) A joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein: said sliding ring has a disk shape.

19. (Withdrawn) A joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein: said sliding ring is slotted.

20. (Original) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein: said sliding ring has an approximately L shaped cross section.

21. (Withdrawn) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein: said sliding ring has an approximately T shaped cross section.

22. (Withdrawn) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein:
said sliding ring has an approximately F shaped cross section.

23. (Original) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein:
said sliding ring is vulcanized directly to said pivot-side edge area of said sealing
bellows.

24. (Currently Amended) A ball-and-socket joint sealing connection for a joint having
a housing, a bearing shell inserted into the housing and a ball pivot with a joint ball mounted
movably in all directions in the bearing shell, the joint sealing connection comprising:

5 a sealing bellows connected between the housing and the ball pivot, said sealing
bellows having a pivot-side edge area;
a ball race fixed on said ball pivot; and
a sliding ring receiving the pivot-side edge area of said sealing bellows, said sliding
ring including an axial extension and a radial extension, said sliding ring being slidably
connected to said ball race and slideable relative to said race to slide and move relative to said
10 race and having a sliding face facing the joint ball arranged adjacent to the ball race.

25. (Currently Amended) A ball-and-socket joint, comprising:

a housing;
a bearing shell arranged in said housing

a ball pivot with a joint ball mounted pivotally in said bearing shell;
5 a sealing bellows arranged between said housing and said ball pivot, said sealing bellows including a pivot-side edge area;
a race fixed on said ball pivot; and
a sliding ring receiving said pivot-side edge area of said sealing bellows, said sliding ring being slidably arranged in said race for sliding movement of said pivot-side edge area and
10 said sliding ring relative to said race.

26. (Currently Amended) A joint in accordance with claim 25, wherein:
said sliding ring has a sliding face surface facing the joint ball and arranged adjacent to said race, said sliding face surface of said ring sliding around relative to said race.

27. (Currently Amended) A joint in accordance with claim 25, wherein:
said sliding ring is rotatable around movable relative to said race and said ball pivot in rotational direction as to a central axis of said ball pivot.

**This Page is Inserted by IFW Indexing and Scanning
Operations and is not part of the Official Record**

BEST AVAILABLE IMAGES

Defective images within this document are accurate representations of the original documents submitted by the applicant.

Defects in the images include but are not limited to the items checked:

- BLACK BORDERS**
- IMAGE CUT OFF AT TOP, BOTTOM OR SIDES**
- FADED TEXT OR DRAWING**
- BLURRED OR ILLEGIBLE TEXT OR DRAWING**
- SKEWED/SLANTED IMAGES**
- COLOR OR BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPHS**
- GRAY SCALE DOCUMENTS**
- LINES OR MARKS ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT**
- REFERENCE(S) OR EXHIBIT(S) SUBMITTED ARE POOR QUALITY**
- OTHER: _____**

IMAGES ARE BEST AVAILABLE COPY.

As rescanning these documents will not correct the image problems checked, please do not report these problems to the IFW Image Problem Mailbox.